MONTEREY NEWS

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The Town

by Susan Gallant

Wilson McLaughlin House Update

Committee members from the Wilson McLaughlin House (WMH) joined the Select Board meeting on January 13 to discuss plans going forward for the community center, along with its more immediate needs, one of which involves the maintenance and upkeep of the property.

Maynard Forbes, whose Highway Department will provide grounds maintenance, put together some initial estimates that the WMH committee reviewed and revised. Other than parking-lot maintenance and landscaping, which the committee believes the town has always been responsible for, the projected cost to the town for maintaining the property will be approximately $6,450, with another $13,500 going toward capital expenses, while the committee will contribute $1,600 for upkeep and $5,700 in capital expenses. Committee members also thought that cleaning expenses should be considerably lower than Maynard's projections since they anticipate that those who use the building will clean up after themselves, along with the support of volunteers. The logistics of co-managing the center with the town will require in-depth discussions so that a detailed plan can be put into writing. Preliminary thoughts on the matter have committee members initially responsible for the center's daily operations, including scheduling and accounting, with those tasks eventually being handed off to the town.

Many details still need to be ironed out, including who's responsible for paying the center's utilities and how to access the funds approved at the last town meeting. Although the responsibility for who pays for utilities is still being looked

Opening reception for In the Details exhibition in Knox Gallery, Monterey Library (photo by Julie Shapiro)

into, Melissa Noe, Monterey's executive secretary, was able to explain to committee members that an invoice, with accompanying receipts, for services performed or goods purchased must be submitted to the town accountant, who will, in turn, request that a check be cut for payment to a vendor or to reimburse an individual.

But no matter who pays for what, committee members wanted to assure the Select Board that fundraising efforts are ongoing and will continue throughout the life of the center.

Finance Committee Q&A

In light of the recent property tax hike, the Select Board (SB) sat down with the Finance Committee (FC) to get answers to some vexing questions:

SB: What is Monterey's maximum allowable levy for FY15?

FC: *This cannot be answered until the recap is completed.*

SB: The FY14 levy limit was $2,953,386, our operating expenses were $3,286,878, and our total operating and special articles were $3,697,221. Can you explain why there is a difference between our FY14 levy limit and our actual spending approved at town meeting?

FC: *This is because there are other incomes received other than taxes collected which can add up to somewhere between $600k and $700k. Other incomes from last year that have been certified totaled $265,000.*

SB: What is levy capacity as opposed to levy limits or ceilings?

FC: *The levy capacity is the difference between the maximum allowable levy and the current levy.*

Stan Ross believes that about $750,000 is currently in stabilization, about $30,000 is in the reserve fund, and $200,000 is in free cash. The treasurer cannot verify these numbers until she and the accountant can reconcile the FY 2013 books and the state certifies our free cash.

During this meeting a decision was made to have the accountant hold and flag any payment requests that put a department over budget and to notify the Select Board so that an informed decision can be made about any overage. In addition, the accountant should be reminded to provide each department with monthly expenses reports that include remaining budget levels.

According to the Finance Committee, departments that exceed their budget can be covered by transfers, approved by the Finance Committee, from free cash. But uppermost for the Finance Committee is the goal to spend less money over the coming year.

Fire Department Finances

Shawn Tryon, Monterey's fire chief, joined the January 13 Select Board meeting to discuss finances for this and the coming year. Total compensation allocated at last May's annual town meeting for the department this year was $91,500. To date, records show that $12,700 has been spent on education and training; however, Shawn said that amount is actually $14,200. So far this year, firefighters have received $31,620 for responding to calls. Shawn believes that training for the entire year should total no more than $30,000, leaving $61,500 for firefighting and other emergency calls. As of January 13, the department has responded to more than 60 calls.

To gain a clear understanding of how the money is allocated, the Select Board would like compensation to be separated out into two accounts on the upcoming warrant: one for training and the other for calls. For fiscal year 2015, Shawn would like to increase the budget to $36,500 for education and training and $63,800 for calls. The request for expenses will increase to $50,000. One capital improvement, the result of new regulations for defibrillators for both the police and fire departments, will need to be budgeted for fiscal year 2015 in the amount of $14,500.

Police Report

Gareth Backhaus, Monterey's chief of police, reported on the following activity:

- The Highway Department requested help with a tractor trailer that was stuck and needed to back out the entire length of Beartown Mt. Rd.
- A lost dog was located and returned to its owner.
- A two-car accident on Tyringham Rd. required the Fire Department to remove two people from the cars.
- Police responded to a fire on Sackman Way.

Thai Yoga Bodywork

Local References *Sliding Scale*

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- Trees were reported down on Mt. Hunger and Hupi Rds.
- A sick porcupine was removed with the help of the environmental police.
- A cell phone was turned in, and Apple Security was contacted and is tracking down the owner.
- A suspicious vehicle on Tyringham Rd. turned out to be a lost motorist.
- Police responded to a complaint of trespassing on property near Lake Garfield.
- During routine stops, there were three separate instances of motor vehicles being unregistered and uninsured. All three vehicles were towed.
- Police responded to a call about an unidentified vehicle parked on private property on Cronk Rd. The operator had been involved in an accident the previous night and was subsequently charged with leaving the scene of an accident.
- Police responded to alarms on Beartown Mt. Rd. and Northeast Cove Rd., both of which turned out to be false.
- Police responded to motor vehicle accidents on Main and Sandisfield Rds.
- A motor vehicle was stopped on Main Rd. for driving without headlights at night. The vehicle was deemed unsafe to operate and was towed.
- A tree was reported down and on wires on Sandisfield Rd.
- Police were unable to locate a dog lost on Brett Rd.

Like a Dog with a Bone

In their ongoing efforts to find a suitable area for dogs to run off-leash in Monterey, Julio Rodriguez and Pat Salamon came by to update the Select Board on their continued search. The estimates on the cost of clearing the land behind the firehouse pavilion—the area most recently earmarked for the project—proved to be prohibitively high. With the hope of finding a spot that is already cleared, Julio, Pat, et al., are planning to speak with the executive director of Gould Farm to see whether an acre of land would be available to lease. What's already known is that Gould Farm needs to know the type of fencing needed, the maintenance such an area will require, the amount of parking, and the rules and regulations to maintain safety, peace, and a modicum of harmony among both the

(*cont. on p. 4*)

Children at Monterey School Having Active Year

The children at the Monterey School had a great time ice-skating at the Monterey Pavilion recently! Thanks to all the folks who help maintain the rink!

What lucky children to get to go to school in a town with so many rich resources. In October we got to meet and greet everyone in town when we trick-or-treated at the Library, Post Office, General Store, Town Hall and Fire Station. Thanks to all who made the day so much fun!

We also went several times to Bidwell Park this fall and learned math and science at this amazing place on the Konkapot River. Every other week we also visit the Monterey Library where Kate Basler volunteers her time to read to us. Thanks, Kate!

Believe it or not, it is almost time to start enrolling children for the next school year! If you would like to know more about the Monterey School and even schedule a visit, feel free to call us at (413) 528-3693!

—Lynn Webster

Pauline Nault: Mere Color Moves

February 7 – March 15

artist reception
February 7, 6 – 7:30 pm

KNOX GALLERY, Monterey Library

(*Town, cont. from p. 3*)
four-legged and two-legged visitors. The Select Board has also requested a list of these details and is also unclear about what type of insurance would be needed to cover any mishaps at the park, especially if the site is not located on town property.

All this is in the process of being sorted out. Funding for the project can be requested at the annual town meeting only if all the details are in place.

Library Grant in the Making

On January 13, the Select Board met with library director Mark Makuc and library trustees Mary Paul Yates and Kenn Basler about the library application for a state grant to fund library planning and design, which was due in Boston on March 17. Mark was still completing the paperwork and would need one Select Board member's signature on the application once it was ready for submission. Notification of the libraries that will be receiving the grant funding will be made in June.

Mark also wanted the Select Board to know that he's been speaking with the grant administrators about the possibility of a multiuse building that would house both the library and the community school.

Board?

At a joint meeting of the Planning and the Select Boards it was unanimously agreed to appoint Tom Sawyer to fill the vacant position on the Planning Board until the next town election. Tom will be receiving a letter from the Select Board informing him of his appointment.

On January 27, Steve Weisz stopped by the Select Board meeting to express interest in joining the Monterey Historical Commission. A note from the Select Board will be sent to all members of that group, informing them of Steve's interest in the Commission and that the Select Board is in the process of nominating him.

School Survey Results

Some 140 people participated in the Monterey community school survey—an impressive number, considering the size of our town. The responses have been tallied and the results are as follows:

Of those who participated, 89 percent are registered voters and 95 percent are homeowners, whereas only 21 percent have school-aged children.

When asked about supporting a $10,000 engineering study and/or construction plan for building a new school, 31 percent would support such a project, while 69 percent would not. Similarly, only 30 percent of participants were in favor of building a new school at the town's expense, with 70 percent not offering their support, preferring to close the community school and bus the children out of town. (It should be noted that, in retrospect, the survey's compilers now realize that this question needed further refinement and possibly should have been broken into at least two separate questions, so that attitudes toward other alternatives, besides the two posed in this question, could be gauged.)

When given a choice of location for the site of a new school, 72 percent prefer the Wilson McLaughlin House property, as opposed to 28% who prefer the location behind the firehouse.

When given the opportunity to comment, 38 respondents did so. The comments, all of which should be available to read on the town's website (www.montereyma.gov), varied widely. Some offered alternative suggestions, others were strongly opposed to putting what many anticipate as a considerable sum of money into a school that only a handful of children will attend, while a few were critical of the survey itself.

But despite its flaws, the survey did accomplish the goal of determining townspeople's attitude toward new construction. With that information in hand, alternative solutions can now be developed.

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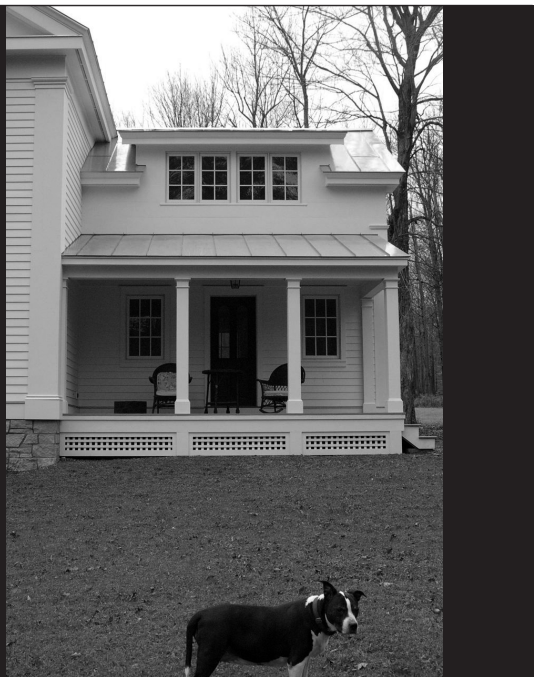

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Meeting of the Minds
Visioning Monterey's Future

On the evening of January 28, the meeting room at town hall was filled to an impressive capacity with an enthusiastic group of Monterey's citizenry, eager to discuss and share ideas. Specifically, four projects were up for discussion: the Wilson McLaughlin House community center, the Monterey Library, the Monterey School, and the Bidwell House.

Joe Baker, committee member for the Wilson McLaughlin House (WMH), began by explaining that the house is owned by the town, which requires that state guidelines must be followed for such tasks as putting jobs out to bid and what the building itself must house, such as two handicap-accessible bathrooms. Unfortunately, the house was in rough shape when the project began, making the job of creating a habitable structure, let alone one that complies with state guidelines, a daunting and expensive task. Among other projects, the building's roof has been replaced, and come spring, a company skilled in restoring old buildings has been hired to continue work on the house.

Looking forward, Joe sees the community center as a place to hold classes, share craft and sewing projects, conduct meetings, and play games, as well as a safe location for children to wait for a parent, to do their homework, or maybe to get help with that homework.

Until the doors to the community center open, the WMH committee will continue to manage the building's restoration. Then, with the town, it will co-manage the center for two years, eventually handing off management to the town.

Mark Makuc, director of the Monterey Library, then spoke about the library building, which was built in 1931. Mark recently applied for a grant that would fund a feasibility and design study for a renovated or new building. The amount of the grant is $50,000, which be used to hire a library consultant to evaluate the current structure and how it is being used. Then a project manager and an architect would be brought on to come up with different plans for renovating the existing structure or building a new one in the existing location or at some other location in town.

Mark won't know whether Monterey will be awarded the grant money until June. In the meantime, he would like to assemble a committee to discuss various options for improving the library and to find out what changes the residents of Monterey would like to see in their library. If anyone is interested in helping on this committee, please contact Mark at the library.

Next, Catherine Roberts, Bidwell House Museum board member, and Barbara Palmer, museum director, spoke about a grant that is in process to fund a new roof and handicap accessibility for the eighteenth-century structure that was home to Adonijah Bidwell, the first minister of Township No. 1. Barbara believes that the project will take about five years to complete.

Finally, Scott Jenssen, who is a member of the Monterey Select Board and has been involved in evaluating the condition of the current building that houses the school as well as looking at alternative locations, broached the subject of the Monterey Community School, beginning with a discussion of the survey results (see "School Survey Results," p.4). That's when things got lively.

Scott agreed, with regret, that the survey questions could have been posed in a way that would have provided more useful information. He went on to explain that seven years ago the current building was determined to need repairs in excess of $400,000 to correct problems that had accumulated over the years. To complicate matters further, if the needed repairs were to exceed 30 percent of the value of the building ($400k in repairs would certainly do that), then the building would have to be renovated to be 100 percent compliant with the Architectural Access Code, which would no doubt add to the already hefty cost of repairs, even if that were possible to do, given the elevated, tiny plot of land on which the school sits.

With those figures in mind, it seemed that building a new structure might cost as much or possibly even less than renovat-

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ing the current building. Another option that was discussed back then was using the Wilson McLaughlin House to house the Monterey School, and a community center when school wasn't in session. Since donations had already been coming in that were earmarked specifically for a community center, the concern was that contributors might not look kindly on their funds being diverted for a project they might not support.

At one point Don Torrico, Monterey's building commissioner, interjected, confirming the 30 percent rule, but also adding that the current school building passes inspection every year.

Then comments and suggestions began flying. One person said that a group of people went to look at the old school to see what shape it was in, and even interviewed the teacher to find out how she felt about the building. Many spoke about the important role a community school has in a small town such as ours. There was also talk about some people meeting separately to brainstorm and throw out ideas.

One suggestion of note came from Muriel Lazzarini, chair of the Select Board. She suggested that Bally Gally, a home on the Wilson McLaughlin property that the town currently rents out, should be considered as a possible new location for the Monterey School.

The meeting finally ended with a commitment to meet next month to continue the discussion. That meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 25, at 7:30 p.m. in the town hall meeting room. All are welcome to contribute to this important community conversation about the future of our town.

—Susan Gallant

Planning Board News

The Planning Board welcomed Tom Sawyer to our ranks at the January 9 meeting. Sawyer responded to a request in the *Monterey News* seeking someone to fill a vacancy on the board. On January 9 the Select Board and the Planning Board held a joint meeting (during the regular meeting of the Planning Board) to make the appointment, which was unanimously approved by both boards. Sawyer will serve until the annual town elections in May 2014 when the seat will be up for election.

The Planning Board held its annual election of officers with Stephen Enoch and Maggie Leonard continuing to co-chair the board. The board unanimously agreed to pursue hiring a professional clerk who will be responsible for taking minutes and other administrative tasks, as opposed to a Planning Board member filling the position. The job entails attending the two regular Planning Board meetings held on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, taking the minutes of the meeting, and emailing the minutes to board members prior to the next meeting. Occasionally there will also be other administrative tasks such as mailing notices and copying. The board has estimated that the job will take approximately eight hours a month and is offering $10 per hour. If you are interested in the position please contact Maggie Leonard via email at mleonard@bcn.net or call 528-9685.

For the past few months, board members have expressed interest in creating a zoning bylaw that allows for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in Monterey. The board agreed that ADUs, also known as mother-in-law apartments, can expand living options for all families, and are especially helpful to elderly people who may be able to continue living in their home with help. To that end, the board voted unanimously to direct its energy toward researching ADUs and what would be optimal for our community in this regard. Monterey voters are cordially invited to attend all Planning Board meetings, and the board agreed to post regular updates of the ongoing work in the *Monterey News*.

—Maggie Leonard
Monterey Planning Board

Monterey Democratic Party Caucus Feb. 18

Democrats in Monterey will be holding a caucus in the basement of the Monterey UCC Church on Saturday, February 8 (with a snow day Saturday, February 15) to elect delegates and alternates to the 2014 Massachusetts Democratic Convention, at which time candidates for statewide office will be endorsed. The convention will be held Friday, June 13, and Saturday, June 14, at the DCU Center in Worcester. The caucus is open to any registered Democrat from Monterey and the Democratic Committee welcomes participants.

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Community Center News

Construction work was due to begin on December 30 on the first phase of actual renovation, but due to the cold and snow it was a slow start. The faithful Monterey Highway Department has been keeping the place plowed, and the crew from Kronenberger and Sons Restoration has made good progress in preparing for new concrete work in the basement. As soon as there is a break in the temperature, they will be pouring footings! Then it's on from there with supports, more concrete, new sills for the post-and-beam frame and a complete new subfloor. Their work conditions are greatly improved now due to the activation of our temporary electric service for construction, thanks to the diligent work of Monterey's Dan Andrus.

During the winter, the committee is working on the application for a matching-funds grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council Capital Facilities Fund, which we hope to submit to them in February. At the same time we have a post-and-beam engineer working with us and with architect Steve McAlister (of Clark and Green, Great Barrington) to make specific plans for the post-and-beam-frame work to be done, and then the closing in of the walls with structural insulated panels.

Maureen Banner

Cold weather this month slowed down the work on the basement and first floor of the Wilson McLaughlin House, but the committee is working up the plans for the next phase of construction for the Community Center; here Joe Baker (l) and Michael Banner are making measurements and calculations upstairs.

The Wilson McLaughlin House is going to look much the same from the outside, but inside those clapboards it's going to be quite different!

As always, we welcome your input and your donations (fully tax-deductible), which you can make online at our website www.ccmonterey.org. Look there for photos of the construction work as it goes forward and for the latest news.

Thanks!

—Joe Baker for FWMH

Monterey Library Notes

On Saturday, February 8, at 10:30 a.m. there will be a Valentine's story and craft at the library for preschool through elementary aged children.

Last fall I wrote about forming a building needs committee and would like a couple of more volunteers to join as we start to examine our 1931 library. We hope to start meeting in the next six weeks. No experience needed, just a willingness to examine how Monterey uses the library and think about how this building will be used for the next twenty years. We will be examining whether this building meets the needs of the town and whether it is possible to adapt to projected uses. So if you are at all interested in planning for the future this should be an interesting committee. Much is changing in the way libraries serve their communities. Change seems to happen faster and faster and planning is critical if the library is going to meet these future challenges. Email montereylibrary@gmail.com to express your interest or call me at 528-3795.

—Mark Makuc, Library Director

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Attorney At Law

32 Corser Hill Road
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Facsimile: (413) 229-7085
Email: ssmithlaw@hughes.net

Taxpayers' Corner
Property-Tax Sticker Shock

To bring in the new year, the Town of Monterey greeted property owners, via mail, with an alarming increase in their tax bills. According to the Department of Revenue, the average single-family tax bill in Monterey for 2014 is $3,245, up $273, or 9.2%, from the prior year's average tax bill of $2,972.

This is the second year in a row town officials have seen fit to bestow such a new year's gift on taxpayers. In 2013, we received a 6.3% increase, which means the average tax bill in Monterey has gone up a whopping 16% in the last two years. For comparison, during the prior three years, between 2009 and 2012, the average tax bill increased a *total* of only 5.1%.

According to the January *Monterey News*, the 2014 tax increase was "mostly the result of the huge assessment of $1,278,491 levied on Monterey by the regional school district, an 11.64% increase."

But is this really true? The 2014 budget presented at town meeting last May was $352,785.24 higher than the 2013 budget. This amount was increased another $14,000 by the Finance Committee for the nonprofit Friends of Wilson-McLaughlin House, and then the Select Board called a special town meeting in July at which another $32,200 was appropriated. Therefore, the total increase in the 2014 budget was $398,985.24, or 8.4%, which means the school budget increase of $133,211 accounted for only about a third of the gross 2014 budget increase.

So where did the "huge" increase truly originate? It was "mostly" the result of non-school municipal budget increases of over $265,000.

But a more egregious injury was done to Monterey's financial health last year by town officials. They decimated the town's Excess Levy Capacity and have now put us within $7,348 of an override.

What does this mean? And how did it happen?

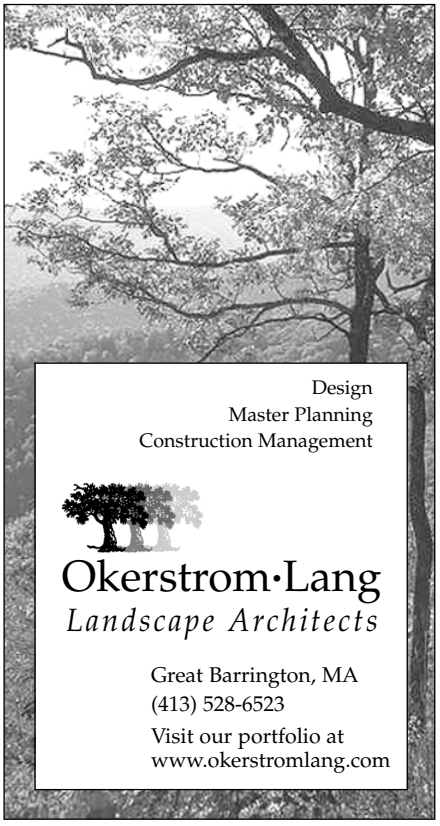
In 1980, a ballot measure called Proposition 2½ was passed in Massachusetts. The purpose of Prop 2½ was to give voters more control over property taxes by limiting the annual increase in the maximum amount a municipality can levy on taxpayers to 2.5% plus new growth. This limit is called the Levy Limit, and a municipality can levy taxes up to (or at any levy below) that limit, without an override vote.

Excess Levy Capacity is the difference between the Total Tax Levy and the Levy Limit. In 2012, Monterey's Excess Levy Capacity was a healthy $262,874, but the Select Board used $81,605 of it that year for the FY 2013 budget, and it fell to $18l,269. Then, last year, they burned through another $173,921 for the FY 2014 budget, leaving us now with a razor thin margin of only $7,348.

In 2007, Monterey's Excess Levy Capacity was $300,477. Between then and 2012, our Excess Levy Capacity remained robust, dropping only $37,603 in five years. However, in the two years since, the Select Board has drained it by $255,526. (See http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/municipal-data-and-financial-management/data-bank-reports/proposition-2-12.html.)

Furthermore, if the Select Board cannot control the upcoming 2015 budget, they will either have to take even more of your savings from Free Cash and/or Stabilization funds to cover any budget increases, or, since there is no excess capacity left, ask for an override, permanently raising the amount you can be taxed.

And here's a final twist: A simple mathematical calculation tells us that at last year's annual town meeting, the Select Board's warrant had actually *exceeded* the Levy Limit before we had even gotten to the end of Article 3 (the line-item budget), in which increases of $221,206.24 were appropriated for total operating expenses. The Select Board knew there was only



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$181,269 in Excess Levy Capacity available to them, so they should have known they were going into override territory as voters began to consider the $396,343 in Special Articles that followed. (Actually, because the Finance Committee moved to appropriate an additional $14,000 for the Wilson House, there were $410,343 in Special Articles.)

So—by the time $410,343 in Special Articles had been passed, town officials had appropriated an amount that turned out to be $160,452 above the Levy Limit. But Article 17, which followed, led voters to believe they could "lower the tax levy" by appropriating $200,000 from Free Cash, when town officials were actually avoiding an override without admitting it. (And in fact, the Tax Levy *rose* $251,640 *despite* that misuse of town savings, and would have risen by an unprecedented $451,640 without that misuse.)

What would have happened if voters had not been misled but had been told the truth—that Article 17 was not going to "lower the tax levy" but would cover up for a budget that had pushed the town $160,452 over the Levy Limit?

And what if Article 17 had failed? The town would then have found itself in the unprecedented position of passing a budget that exceeded the Levy Limit, and being subsequently notified by the Department of Revenue that it could not use the money it had over-appropriated. Another town meeting would have been required to rectify the mistake and, if voters then refused to approve an override, the budget would have had to have been slashed by $160,452 .

(To make the math perfectly clear: we have only $7,348 in Excess Levy Capacity. If the $200,000 had not been taken from Free Cash last year to "lower the tax levy," we would now be—after the July special town meeting—a total of $192,652 over the Levy Limit.)

The honest approach to last year's budget would have been for the Select Board to acknowledge that their budget was exceeding the Levy Limit by asking for an override at the start of town meeting. That would have given voters the information they needed to understand the true size of the budget.

Instead, however, they overspent dollars the town could not afford, and then, at the end of the warrant, asked unwitting voters to pass Article 17 to "lower the tax levy." Which it did not.

The result of this careless behavior is that in two years the Tax Levy has gone up $419,024, $200,000 has been misspent from Free Cash, Excess Levy Capacity has been gutted by $255,526, we are $7,348 from an override, and the average tax bill has increased by16%.

I think these numbers speak for themselves, but don't take my word for it. Instead, I encourage you all to investigate this matter yourselves by contacting the Select Board and questioning their actions.

Just be careful what you ask for. The Select Board may tell you that it was not them but you, the voters, who went on this spending spree by approving all these expenditures and that you are now paying the tax bills you deserve.

—Jonathan Sylbert

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"The Myths of Aging" at Community Potluck Feb. 19

At the January Potluck, Barbara Swann regaled us with wonderful stories of intrigue, many marriages, and twenty-five children in one household(!) to tell the tale of the mysterious instrument (which will not be named here) that is in the hands of the Monterey Historical Society. Once again, we are grateful to her for her knowledge, expertise, and great presentation.

For the February Potluck, we have Dr. Lisa Nelson, who will present a program on "The Myths of Aging." She dispels the notion that genes are more important than lifestyle, and provides evidence for the fact that we can remain healthy, vibrant, and fit throughout our lives.

Lisa Nelson, MD, is a practicing family doctor in Pittsfield. She received her medical degree from the University of Massachusetts in Worcester and completed residency in family medicine at Boston Medical Center. A longtime advocate for community wellness, she serves as the Director of Medical Education for the Kripalu Healthy Living programs and as medical director of the nonprofit Nutrition Center in Pittsfield. She lives in Lenox with her husband, also a family doctor, and their two children.

The next Monterey Community Potluck Dinner will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse on Wednesday, February 19, at 6 p.m. Please bring a dish to share with a serving utensil, and a place setting and silverware for yourself. Everyone is welcome.

—Barbara Dahlman & Kyle Pierce

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Who's Who in Monterey
Lisanne Finston

Lisanne surprised me by telling me, "Surprise me." I'd told her that I would send her a draft of what I wrote, which is my usual next step in writing these profiles. I want to be sure about getting the facts straight, but more than that I want the subject of the feature to recognize him- or herself in what I have written and to have no regrets in what she or he disclosed. This is a profile, I always explain, not an exposé. So I send a draft for final approval. "I'll email that to you in a few days," I told Lisanne, but, sitting in the suddenly busy Roadside Café, she waved the idea away. "Surprise me," she said.

Of course, as the new executive director of Gould Farm, just two months into the role, Lisanne hardly has time to proofread my writing. More than that, though, she is little concerned with what others think of her. This isn't to imply that she goes out of her way to chafe or offend, but to say that, after years of working in service-oriented nonprofit organizations, she knows people will have their opinions about her and not much good can come of trying to manage those.

This makes her ideal for the role she has just accepted at Gould Farm. The largest employer in town, and committed to such important work, the Farm has won the hearts and minds of practically every Monteruvian; it has attracted everyone's opinions as well. No doubt, Lisanne will

Matt Rainey

be something of a lightening rod—and as such, it's a good thing she's so grounded.

She credits her "typical suburban" upbringing for this—born Lisanne Finston in Parsippany, New Jersey, one of a pair of daughters. Her father worked in town, her mother was a homemaker, and Lisanne's evaluation of this typicality is, "It's awesome."

There were a few anomalies in the formula, though. Her uncle was a Methodist pastor who adopted many children, and of all sorts. So, her family was one in which membership was a more fluid thing than you might expect. You didn't need to be born into belonging. But, once you were in, you were in. She remembers the family culture as one in which ideas and opinions were respected, and in which the aim wasn't everyone being alike but everyone being themselves.

It's this combination of traits, which might seem mutually exclusive, that most characterize Lisanne as I got to know her: there is constancy, reliability about her, but also spontaneity and surprise. There is as well an innate sense of justice. Lisanne remembers an incident in middle school when a teacher accused a boy of cheating, copying work off Lisanne's paper. The only Hispanic boy in the class, he hadn't done it, Lisanne was sure. So she stood up spontaneously and argued his case. "What are you, his lawyer?" Lisanne remembers the teacher's incredulous response.

Lisanne left New Jersey for college, attending American University in Washington, D.C., but returned to attend Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS), from which she graduated with a Master of Divinity. Her time in school, though, had her out on the streets as much as it did in the classroom. Some of her closest friends in Princeton weren't fellow students but people from the city that, despite its name associated with the high-toned and Ivy League, is, like any city, a place of hardship as well.

After four years at PST, she graduated and was ordained in the United Methodist Church, serving for three years in the parish. The bulk of her work life to date, though, has unsurprisingly been in social service and advocacy, mostly in New Brunswick, New Jersey, at an organization that began as a soup kitchen but, under Lisanne's leadership, became so much more.

Called Elijah's Promise, the name is in reference to the biblical prophet Elijah and his encounter with a widow who was

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starving during a time of famine. So called, its aim was, and still is, to "harness the power of food to break the cycle of poverty, alleviate hunger, and change lives." The people involved, according to its website, "envision a community where no one goes hungry for lack of food or funds; where a good meal is a nutritious meal; where our community learns to steward natural and financial resources wisely; and where we make opportunity available to those who seek it."

In the twenty years that Lisanne served as executive director, Elijah's Promise expanded as an advocacy, and then an educational, organization, providing food then culinary training then employment opportunity at the café and catering business established on site. It also took on health issues facing their population, first with intervention and then with prevention. By the time Lisanne left, it had an operating budget of $2 million and was funded by both public and private entities.

Her leave-taking was, as she said, like attending her own funeral. This implies, I imagine, not only having the chance to eavesdrop on heaping (and well-deserved) praise, but also the imperative to go and stay gone. Organizations that thrive under the leadership of one person for a long time then need to find their own way under new leadership, unbothered by the one who has left. These professional boundaries can be hard to keep when the bond has been tight and gratifying all around. But in those cases, it is all the more important to honor them. It seems Lisanne has: I searched the website of Elijah's Promise and couldn't find her name anywhere. This indicates to me that it wasn't her ego being gratified in the success of her work there, but her sense of justice, and so it rightly bears the name Elijah rather than Lisanne.

Now to Gould Farm. Lisanne arrived with her partner, Patty, whom she met at PST and who is also an ordained pastor, and their two daughters, Olivia and Maya. Both girls are African-American and adopted, and they are helping to continue in Lisanne's family tradition of the atypically typical. The worry was that they would be perceived here as just too atypical, a worry that found its focus on the girls' first day a few weeks ago at Mt. Everett Regional School in Sheffield. Considering that beginning midyear in any school can be tough, that starting midstream among a student body that has largely been together since kindergarten can be tough, and that being one of very few black students among a mostly white student body can be tough, these three combined could have been a juggernaut of toughness. But that hasn't been the case. So far, so good, thanks in large part to the excellent theater program at Mt. Everett. Maya a singer, Olivia a dancer, both are drawn to the stage and so will be assets at the school.

I expect that the whole family will likewise be an asset to the town (already have been to the church) and that Lisanne will be a good fit at Gould Farm, which feels quite ready to begin its second century at work. A most welcome surprise: Lisanne is someone you're going to want to know.

—Liz Goodman

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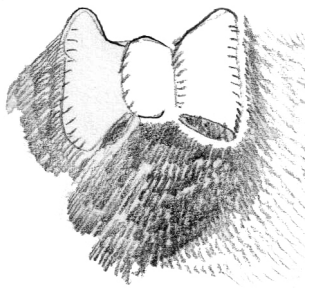
Business Info Fair March 5

On Wednesday, March 5, 2014, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce will host the second annual Business Info Fair. In order to accommodate increased participation, the event will be held at Berkshire South Regional Community Center. Admission to the fair is free, and everyone is welcome.

If you do business in the Berkshires, the Business Info Fair is a one-stop information-gathering experience for locally available products and services such as accounting advertising, banking, consulting, graphics, insurance, photography, printing, signage, wealth management, and web development. Betsy Andrus, Executive Director of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, said she expects thirty vendors to participate and noted the addition of a small business-sponsored hospitality tent to provide refreshments to everyone attending.

Chamber member and consultant Maxine Carter-Lome described the benefits of the Business Info Fair in terms of connections, convenience and cost efficiency: "In the Southern Berkshires we have a whole cottage industry of home-based businesses that make the hiring out of services such as bookkeeping and marketing affordable in our area. Not every business can afford full time employees in these areas so the Business Info Fair serves a real need by connecting individuals and business owners to those who provide professional services on an as needed basis."

If you would like to be a Business Info Fair vendor please contact the SBCC business office at 413-528-4284. The fee for a 10 ft. x 10 ft. booth is $50 for Southern Berkshire Chamber members and $150.00 for non–chamber members.



Bidwell House in Winter

Dormant But Far from Sleeping

It is the dead of winter, when everyone thinks that the Bidwell House Museum is asleep. Ah, not so. We are up here on the hill (come take a walk any time), busily planning ahead for spring—programs, workshops, walks, and talks.

With spring right around the corner, it is time to start thinking about upcoming events at the Museum. Here are a few ways to become involved that you might enjoy:

- **Tours of the Bidwell House Museum**: Be a Docent: Join friends as a docent for the museum. It's a great way to learn about the history of the first community in this area while having a good time with your "docent colleagues." You'll learn about the settlement of Township # 1 and the families that lived in Monterey: how the community evolved, how the house was built. You'll be "playing" with neighbors and friends while educating tourists about the history of the area.
- **Township #1 Day**: Volunteer for part of the day for celebrating community, hosted by the Bidwell House Museum. Be a part of all things historical: learn about the early settlement of Monterey; explore trails; go on a scavenger hunt with your children for historic artifacts; enjoy a wide variety of homemade pies from the pie-baking contest; learn how to build a regulation house; sample face painting; and listen to local musicians.
- **Gardens—beautiful perennial flowers and heirloom vegetables**: Join the Garden Angels, a group of upbeat, dedicated gardeners and want-to-be gardeners who come together to help keep the grounds so beautiful. They spend a few hours several times a season weeding, tending, chatting, and enjoying a snack at the picnic table—all under the expert eye of Ruth Greene, an extraordinary heirloom landscaper and gardener.
- **Trails**: BHM trails are lovely. They tell the story of how people settled, how they travelled from Monterey to Tyringham, from Boston to Stockbridge. You can enjoy them, and you can be part of maintaining them. Help a rugged (and some not-so-rugged) crew of hikers and nature lovers for a few hours of coffee, donuts. and trail clearing.

Our volunteers are a great group of friends and neighbors who help out in a variety of ways throughout the year. So, while you are home, cuddled in front of the fire, please think about "playing" with the Bidwell House Museum this upcoming season. Feel free to call Barbara Palmer or Eileen Mahoney at 413-528-6888 to find out more information about upcoming events and how you can participate.

—Eileen Mahoney

My Day of Community Service

On Saturday, January 18, I had the privilege of representing Monterey to meet with over four hundred other eighth graders from towns all over Massachusetts. As a student from Mt. Everett Regional Middle School, I was chosen to go to our state's capitol to do community service. We were split into groups and given service projects. We left for our assignments shortly after being inspired by a few words from Governor Deval Patrick as well as a recitation of Martin Luther King Junior's "I Have a Dream" speech by first graders from the Orchard Garden Elementary School.

My group was assigned the project of helping out at the biggest homeless shelter in New England, The Pine Street Inn. There I was able to participate in making scarves, birthday cards, and outreach care kits that would benefit homeless people all over Boston. In total, my group helped make 256 sandwiches, 75 apple pies, hundreds of baggies of trail mix, 103 scarves, 700 cards, 200 outreach kits and several panel murals. This experience was amazing for me as I was able to meet the governor, help at a homeless shelter, and meet others who enjoy helping serve their community. I am very fortunate I was able to have this chance to serve my community and am very excited to bring these community service skills back to our community.

—Marya Makuc

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Town Skating Party and Chili Cook-off Feb. 17

Don't forget the annual Skating Party at the firehouse pavilion on Monday, February 17, from 1–3 p.m., sponsored by the Monterey Park Commission.

Music will be provided by DJ Dreggs, Hot cocoa and hot dogs will be available as will fun for all.

New this year to the skating party is the addition of Monterey's first Annual Chili Cook-off. Want to enter your chili?

Attention Chili Lovers

Here is what we are asking for from prospective entrants:

- Must register with Emily Johnson at 528-1443 ext. 113 no later than February 11.
- Must include description of chili, its ingredients and its fire rating from 1–10.
- Must be at least 10 cups, enough to give tastings to all who attend the event.
- Must be in electric croc pot or Sterno-fired chaffing dish.
- Must be set up by 2 p.m. on Monday, February 17, at the firehouse pavilion.

The Parks Department will supply electricity, utensils, paper ware, and tables for entrants and will choose impartial judges who will decide the winner.

All of this in addition to the Annual Skating Party powered by the winter with help from DJ Dreggs spinning tunes, hot coco, hot dogs, and, yes, we will offer water to put out any fires that have started in one's mouth.

—Monterey Park Commission

Steve Graves

Rink Public Skates Sharpened

As a thank you to all the volunteers who invest their time and hard work in setting up and maintaining the Monterey ice rink, Colleen Johnson took all the public-use skates in for a sharpening and lace check. Because ours is a free, volunteer-supported rink, Kenver's of South Egremont gave a generous discount on the work. Colleen urges anyone who would like to contribute in some way to this wonderful community tradition to contact the Monterey Parks Department at montereyparks@verizon.net.

Thank you, Colleen, from the Parks Department and everyone who uses the large assortment of public use skates at the skating pavilion.

—Josh Allentuck, Monterey Park Com.

Cabin Fever Reliever with Easy Ridin' Papas March 1

On Saturday, March 1, at 7:30 p.m. in the Monterey Meetinghouse, the Easy Ridin' Papas—Adam Brown of Monterey (vocals, parlor and resonator guitars) and William "Bing" Conklin of Sheffield (trumpet, cornet, kazoo, vocals, whistling, comic asides)—will be performing. The duo plays a mix of Depression-era blues, jazz, western swing, jug band and gospel music. All are welcome to attend this free event sponsored by the Monterey Cultural Council. Refreshments will be served.

Christian Meditation Group

Meditation has proven physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits and is central to the Christian experience. Meditation, deeply rooted in Christian tradition, is also known as contemplative prayer, the prayer of silence and listening. This is the aim given by the Psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God." Today, there are over eight hundred Christian Meditation groups around the world. The Christian Meditation group of Pittsfield continues to meet every Wednesday afternoon and is welcoming new members. To learn more, please call Val Latona, Monterey, @ 413-528-3512.

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Hannah Fries walks one of the many Gould Farm trails built and maintained by the farm community (photo by Adam Brown).

The Art of Living

by Adam Brown

This article originally appeared in the November-December 2013 issue of A.T. Journeys *and is reprinted by courtesy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.*

Although often viewed as somewhat of a cliché, the human tendency to ask ourselves "what is the meaning of life?" is a persistent one. It is a heady question to be sure, and quite a few philosophers, ministers, comics (and likely a lot of Appalachian Trail hikers as well) have taken a stab at it at some point on varying levels. A few of my favorite attempts from the realm of pop culture fall into the category of comedy: according to the closing lines of Monty Python's sketch comedy movie, *The Meaning of Life*, the answer to the seminal question is given somewhat apathetically as "try and be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations." Another approach is proffered by Douglas Adams in his cult-classic book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in which a supercomputer, called Deep Thought, takes 7.5 million years to calculate an answer to the question and finally coughs up the number 42. Admittedly, these comic attempts to distill such a profoundly mind-boggling question down to a digestible tidbit serve to lighten our outlook and help us deal with the burden of the human condition.

Benton MacKaye—Appalachian Trail visionary, forester, philosopher, and regional planner—also took his turn on "the question," albeit from a slightly different and more serious angle. His attempt to define what is meant by "living" is a pervasive thread running through his book *The New Exploration: A Philosophy of Regional Planning* and the basis for many of the points he brings forth. In one paragraph, he writes: "The word 'live' is a very little word, but its thorough comprehension is something which never perhaps will be attained by our present limited human minds. And no comprehension of it can, perhaps, be attained except through an understanding of the very deep and yet simple psychologic relation which exists between such notions as . . . between work and play."

In *The New Exploration*, MacKaye also briefly endeavors to define "art" and arrives at the idea that art is effort inspired by our human tendency to be invested in the outcome of something. In a letter to a Mrs. Hoyt of New York City in 1932, MacKaye addressed what he calls "the art of living." his conclusion was that living, when done correctly, is an art made up of work and play, industry and culture. The subject of that letter was his impression of Gould Farm, a centerpiece of the quaint, vibrant town of Monterey (population 961) located about nine miles east of Great Barrington and just south and east of the A.T. as it passes through nearby Beartown State Forest amid the bucolic Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts.

Gould Farm—the first residential therapeutic community in the nation dedicated to helping adults with mental illness move toward recovery, health, and greater independence through community living, meaningful work, and individual clinical care—shares a very close connection with

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the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye's sister, Hazel, went to the farm in November of 1927 suffering from a nervous breakdown and stayed there as a guest into the 1940s. During her time there, MacKaye became a regular presence, making close friends at the farm through extended and repeated visits and getting to know one of the founders, Agnes Gould. (Agnes's Husband, Will, had co-founded the farm but passed away before Benton and his sister became fixtures there. That Will was no longer around meant Agnes Gould could consult MacKaye for his opinions on the forest, and she knew that they reflected Will's philosophy.) MacKaye became involved in the management of their forest parcels, offering expertise he had gained as the first graduate of Harvard's newly formed School of Forestry and as associate to Gifford Pinchot, founder of the U.S. Forest Service. MacKaye's 1921 proposal outlining the concept of an Appalachian Trail addressed the problems inherent with modern living, covering recreation and leisure, nature, and natural resources, as well as possibility for physical and mental healing through immersion in the outdoors and the Appalachian environment.

The 670-acre farm, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2013, comprises about 500 acres of northern hardwood, red oak, and white pine woodlands that have been designated a Model Forest by the Forest Guild—one of only 21 across the entire country to achieve that status—and is also a certified Tree Farm. These designations are due in large part to the efforts of Bob Rausch, forest manager at the farm for 34 years, who has long been an advocate for responsible forest stewardship and was instrumental in helping to create a forest management plan to guide current and future land stewardship decisions on the property. Bob has also been a dedicated A.T. maintainer for the past 23 years. "I frequently take Gould Farm guests out on my section of the A.T. (Beartown Mountain Road to Fernside Road)," Bob notes, "to do basic maintenance—work heals!" Guests often begin their stay at Gould Farm by joining in the work of the forest and grounds team, led by Bob, that maintains the farm's network of woodland trails, grounds, and indoor common living areas. This allows guests to become acquainted with one another, settle in to working in a team environment, and get to know their surroundings.

Bob Rausch (left) and Jon greene, longtime friends and A.T. volunteers (photo by Sherene Smith)

The healthy and diverse forestland at the farm is utilized in a variety of ways per the management plan: for saleable timber, maple syrup production, recreation trails, and supplemental fuel wood to heat the 35 buildings on the campus. All of these provide a very practical economic benefit to the farm, but the overarching land-management goal is for the property to be a healing environment for its guests. Indeed the 100 or so members of the Gould Farm community (about 40 guests and 60 staff and family members) find regular solace through a variety of ways in this forest. Acting executive director Donna Burkhart succinctly sums this up by observing, "In our world today there is a loss of connection to humanity, particularly for those struggling with mental illness. There is a psychological influence on people when they enter the woods at Gould Farm—we have an intact model forest that is part of our process of healing, which allows people to get out of their heads and into the woods and into the soil with their hands and feet."

The psychological, physical, and spiritual benefits of time spent outside in nature while engaging our bodies and

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minds in either exertion or contemplation is not a particularly new concept. It gained in popularity through the latter half of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century as the U.S. population began to divest itself of a rural lifestyle and move into cities. MacKaye witnessed that divestment and came to believe that the possibilities for health and recuperation from the city lifestyle by spending time outdoors along the Appalachian mountain chain were multitude. He wrote, in 1921, that "oxygen in the mountain air . . . is a natural resource (and a national resource) that radiates to the heavens its enormous health-giving powers. . . . Here is a resource that could save thousands of lives." The same is still true; even as I sit here and write these words, veterans in the process of transitioning from their military service back to civilian life by through-hiking the A.T. as participants in Warrior Hike "Walk off The War" program are on the last steps of their journey and summiting Katahdin today. This effort to ease veterans back into daily civilian life stems from the same sentiment as MacKaye's philosophy that many sufferers of mental illness could be cured not simply by "treatment" but by immersion in the natural world. The way he put it was, "They need acres not medicine. Thousands of acres of this mountain land should be devoted to them with whole communities planned and equipped for their cure."

In his 1921 vision statement for the A.T., MacKaye laid out four primary features: the trail, shelter camps, community groups, and food and farm camps. The A.T. as we know it today does not necessarily retain all of MacKaye's original vision voiced in that document, but the first two elements are basically intact. The third and fourth have not become a pervasive part of the A.T. culture but are where Gould Farm fits into MacKaye's vision, and probably why it so captured his attention. With regard to community groups, he noted: "These communities would be used for various kinds of non-industrial activity. They might eventually be organized for special purposes—for recreation, for recuperation and for study. . . . It should stimulate every line of outdoor non-industrial endeavor." And about food and farm camps: "Their development could provide tangible opportunity for working out by actual experiment a fundamental matter in the problem of living. It would provide one definite avenue of experiment in getting 'back to the land.'"

Gould Farm is in many ways the manifestation of the community group that MacKaye dreamt of along the A.T. and hence the reason he came to view the farm as "a school in the art of living." The concept of community is a central part of the healing process and culture at Gould Farm that includes regular socialization and the chance to be creative, learn new things, and broaden one's horizons. All guests who come to the farm spend 30 hours per week working on various "teams": forestry and grounds, farm, garden, Harvest Barn (a bakery), kitchen, maintenance, or the Roadside Store and Café. Hungry A.T. hikers should take note of the Roadside Store and Café, which is open to the public and located a few miles east of the trail crossing of Route 23—the sizeable homemade pancakes topped with the farm's own maple syrup are hard to beat.

Yet another answer to "the question" is provided by a popular bit of pithy bumper-sticker wisdom: "The meaning of life is to live it." Whether or not one views the human tendency to continually question the meaning of life as the consummate cliché or not, the fact remains that if a life is lived with a focus on feeding and improving the physical, emotional, and spiritual corners of humanity, then that living becomes art. MacKaye realized this early on and found that Gould Farm shared his outlook as he witnessed guests (including his sister) receive a way to reconnect with humanity, nature, and the daily cycles crucial to regaining control over their lives and begin to follow Henry David Thoreau's advice to "reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aid, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn."

Adam Brown is the A.T. Conservancy's conservation stewardship manager.

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"Garden Gustation"

What's Cooking from Monterey Gardens & Farms

February Fun

I love it when I see folks in town and they have a recipe to share with me because they share a mutual love of food and garden. Barbara Tryon is one of those people. This is the second recipe I've garnered from her and I'm so glad she was willing to share. I love recipes that have a somewhat "secret" ingredient that can keep the "consumer" mystified. This recipe is one of those. When she told me she had a recipe for hot chocolate that used butternut squash I admit I was a bit skeptical. But any new and interesting way to use up the plentiful, tasty squash in the basement was greatly appreciated. And I love chocolate, especially hot chocolate, when the temperature dips into the negative numbers and your hands just need to hold a mug full of hot drink to warm them up.

So I tried Barbara's recipe for Mayan hot chocolate, and you should too. Mix up a batch and don't tell anyone what the ingredients are. Try it on your Valentine! This thick mug of goodness must be good for you as well. It contains butternut squash, milk, chocolate (not just another vegetable), and no added sugar. When I was making it the first time, I was pleasantly surprised when I looked back after having turned my back on the whirring food processor for a couple of minutes and this beautiful peach-colored fluff about the consistency of whipped cream had appeared. How could that be bad?

Have you ordered any seeds yet?

Stephen Moore

Mayan Hot Chocolate

Contributed by Barbara Tryon (taken from a magazine a while ago); underlined items our own or local.

1 small peeled butternut squash (or delicata squash) cooked in the oven or steamer
2½ cups low-fat High Lawn Farm milk, divided
6 oz. semisweet chocolate
½ tsp. cinnamon
Pinch of nutmeg
Pinch of cardamom
Finely grated semisweet chocolate for garnish (optional)

Cook squash and use ⅔ cup for recipe. Puree squash with ½ cup milk in food processor until smooth.

In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, mix remaining 2 cups of milk, chocolate, and spices. Heat until chocolate is melted and creamy, stirring often. Whisk in squash/milk mixture. Reheat. Garnish mugs with grated chocolate. Serves 4.

—Wendy G. Jensen
wendygj@gmail.com

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Monterey Cultural Council FY 2014 Grants

The Monterey Cultural Council is please to announce its FY 2014 grant awards totaling $4,735 to support twenty-three cultural programs and activities. These awards are made using Massachusetts Cultural Council Funds for Communities. We selected several music and arts programs in our schools; historical programs related to Melville, Ma Bett, and Reverend Bidwell; the Greenagers, working on our Preservation Land Trust trails; Knox Gallery programs and exhibitions; and Bidwell House interns. We will support script development, folk singing, and a theater project (Theater of Freedom) in Great Barrington.

Some important Berkshire cultural institutions are also receiving small amounts of fiscal support from your council, including Shakespeare and Co, Berkshire Children's Chorus, Flying Cloud Institute, Women Writers' workshop, Chesterwood Family Day, and CATA.

Additional programs for arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences will be supported directly by the Town of Monterey in FY 2014, which began last July. We anticipate that we will be able to support poetry, Township #1 Day, and programs at our library, as well as one or more local groups of musicians. These subsidies will be offered later this year, and depending on the outcome of our funding request as part of the 2014 annual town meeting warrant, some additional town funds may become available for more culture and science here in Monterey.

It is rewarding to receive these applications and see the breadth of cultural possibilities here in the Berkshires and to attune the available dollars to Monterey's interests, needs, and talent. Unfortunately, there is a significant cut in the proposed Cultural Activities line in the next state budget. So if these programs enrich your life here in Monterey, contact the Massachusetts Cultural Council, www.massachusettsculturalcouncil/advocacy, and tell them we want more not less funding for culture. With your help, we can turn this budget cut around.

—Pat Salomon,

Snowbirds in Corn Stubble

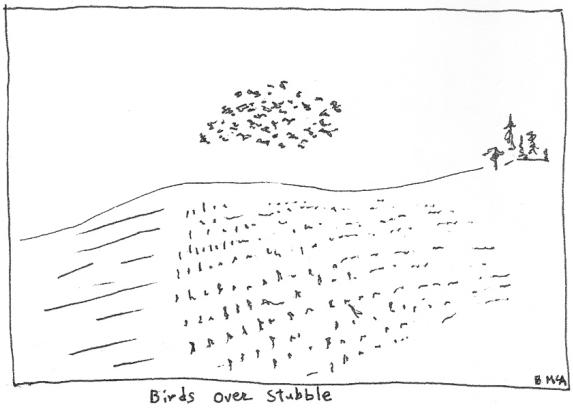
Recently I got lucky. This was good fortune, not some reward I'd earned particularly, and I am not the only one to have been so happy here in Monterey this winter. Other people, too, have seen the snowbirds.

These little sparrow-sized creatures come down to Massachusetts from their Arctic stomping grounds when the snow gets thick up there, covering the low-growing, seed-bearing plants. When they come here they head for open ground, so those of us living deep in the woods don't see them unless we travel out to the clear places. Here in Monterey, this year, the clear place for me is on the way to the dump.

I don't go there often. We generate little in the way of unburnable, uncompostable trash. What we have sits in old feed sacks at the bottom of the cellar stairs, out of sight and mind. Sometimes we head for the dump drawn more by the Swap Shack than by our need to offload trash. That day I finally went I scored two excellent toasters at the Swap Shack, one for me and one for a pal in need. But even before I picked up these treasures, I had already been in heaven, thanks to the snowbirds.

Early writers called them Snowflakes or snow buntings, and today you mostly hear the second name. When I spotted them, swirling over the corn stubble near Diane's Trail, I was driving along and my first thought was "pigeons," just because of the way they swirled and because of flashing light colors, lots of white. Getting closer, I saw they were too teeny for pigeons. They flew tight together and were weaving this way and that, as a group. I pulled over to watch, and then remembered a recent call from Steve Snyder: "The snow buntings are back."

I am jumping out of the truck. The birds have just dropped to the ground out there, vanished. This ground is frozen but muddy on top, and I'm hugging the edges of the near field. I hurry out to the stubble and see nothing. I'd gotten a good enough look from the truck to know there were fifty or sixty birds, and now they are just gone. I am walking, looking, and then I see movement up on the rise ahead. All those little birds are running along together in the same direction, shoulder to shoulder, at a good clip. They are in the important



business of getting a meal, on weed seeds standing up among the cut off cornstalks, and maybe on corn, though I don't think so. There is plenty of corn out here on cobs, lying on the mud. The up sides of the ears have had the corn removed by earlier foragers, but I kick them over and the downsides are still loaded. These buntings are not kicking over the cobs, not stopping long enough anywhere to worry out a kernel of dry corn. They are going along like one creature, one wave of moving groundcover. They go the same way in the air.

Thoreau, writing in his journal in December, 1857: "They run restlessly amid the weeds, so that I can hardly get sight of them through my glass: then suddenly all arise and fly only two or three rods, alighting within three rods of me. (They keep up a constant twittering.) . . . They did not seem to regard me so near, but as they went off, their wave actually broke over me as a rock."

He hears them. "Beside their rippling note, they have a vibratory twitter, and from the loiterers you hear quite a tender peep, as they fly after the vanishing flock" *(Thoreau on Birds, Selections from His Writings* compiled by Helen Cruickshank [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964], 203).

Ernest Thompson Seton, also writing long ago, calls these birds Snowflakes. "As soon as the chill season comes on in icy rigors, the merry Snowflakes appear in great flocks, and come foraging about the barnyards" (*The Birds of Manitoba, Proceedings of the United States National Museum* [1891], xiii). He writes of hearing the Snowflakes singing away in the middle of winter, at thirty degrees below zero. To Seton, they are merry and to Thoreau, their peeping is quite tender.

To be merry and tender in times of icy rigors, there's a trick to learn from the bright snowbirds of Monterey today, and from their earlier admirers.

—Bonner J. McAllester

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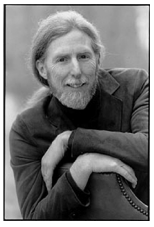

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January Wildlife Report
Birds and Bears in Deep Cold

On New Year's Eve Will Marsh wrote to tell of a bear visit at his place on "one of the coldest nights we've had." By this time many folks were wondering if the bears that had come up from sleep during December's warm spell might have gone back to bed when the polar vortex swung down to freeze us. Will's bear in the cold was looking for calories no matter how small and bent the pole right to the ground, also left claw marks on the emptied feeder. Will and Glynis were visited again nearly three weeks later, again on a very cold night, by a bear that left tracks all around their place. No sleep for this bear.

Cora Baker went for a walk and heard an odd sound, maybe dog-like and maybe cat-like. She'd seen fox tracks around. A visit to this website http://www.soundboard.com/sb/Fox_Sounds_audio let her know she'd heard a red fox barking. Check it out for about 20 different yips and calls a fox can make, including "purring sound."

On January 8 Steve Snyder called about the return of the snow buntings. These little birds of the Arctic only come to open land, which is rare here in the Berkshires. Some of us have seen this flock of 50 or 60 in the Gould Farm gardens, also by the Curtis Road bridge. See my article on p. 18 for more on snow buntings.

As cold as it is, the snow buntings have been singing away. This is typical for them, no matter how cold. There was also a male purple finch singing on and on at the top of a hemlock one bitter day toward the end of the month. He was in the sun up there, in late afternoon.

An early morning knock on the door today took me out to look at big four-toed tracks in the woods near here. You may see some like this if you go out. These were made by deer, with the two parts of the hoof separated at the bottom of the track and then two more small toes showing not quite so deep in the snow. These are called "dewclaws" and they are the two outer toes of the deer. They occur farther up the leg and usually do not show at all in tracks unless there is snow or soft mud. The big front toes (hoof) are often splayed out when footing is not so good. Some deer will drag their feet through the snow, too. The marks from the dewclaws can make the whole thing look as if a big four-toed animal, not so long-legged as a deer, has been walking along. You could think this was a mighty big bobcat all toes and no pad . . . or something. And maybe it was! Bobcats and doe deer are not so likely to drag their feet. Bucks can be another matter.

Thanks for all your news of the wild world, and keep it coming in.

—Bonner McAllester
528-9385 bmca@berkshire.net.

"The Power of Song": Film on Pete Seeger Feb. 22

This 2007 film will be shown at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 22, in the Monterey Church basement. It is the story of the life and music of the man often credited with inspiring the folk music revival of the 1960s. The film, directed by Jim Brown, is 93 minutes long and consists of archival footage, interviews with family and colleagues, plenty of time with Seeger himself over the years, and lots of music as well. The backdrop of course is America, the country Seeger loved. His passion and sheer human energy never let up in all his years, and music was his instrument for expression, for activism. Thousands of Americans found their voices, thanks to Seeger, and thousands picked up the banjo or guitar because he showed how powerful the music is, how it brings people together, and how anyone can do it. The event is free, and all are welcome.

Since Pete Seeger died Monday, January 27, many a fine conversation has taken place, many an obituary written by those who knew him. I could tell how he helped me through the high school days when I might have felt like a lone voice myself. One of the things I like, short and true, was put up on Facebook by Arlo Guthrie: "Well of course he passed away! I'm telling everyone this morning. But that doesn't mean he's gone."

—Bonner McAllester

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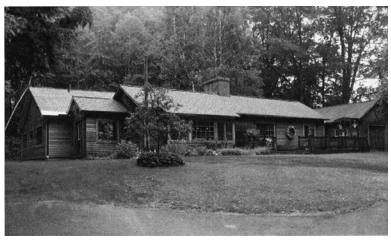

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Roadside Store & Café

The Roadside is a Monterey landmark of good country cooking as well as a friendly gathering for friends and visitors. Before it was purchased by Gould Farm in 1976 from the Enos estate, it was a country store with gas pumps run by a succession of proprietors, including the late Henry Wolfer and his wife. Perhaps the label and concept of a Roadside store came from its location at 276 Main Road, a country mile from Monterey. Coming or going, between Monterey and Roadside you pass side roads leading back in time to cellar holes of an agricultural era of subsistence and one-horse farms.

In 2004, Roadside was put on the Berkshire tourist map for visitors by *Bon Appetit* magazine, which named it as one of the five best places in America to have breakfast! Today the most popular items on the menu still are pancakes in three sizes, small (regular size), medium (dinner-plate size), and large (manhole-cover size), and over stuffed omelets, all deserving recognition as a destination to start the day with a sunny-side-up-service smile.

The Monterey Sesquicentennial logo and Town motto, "'Tis the people that make the place," describes a proficient staff of Manager Fiona De Ris, Assistant Manager Shannon Hughes, and two part-time helpers, Cheryl Fitzpatrick and Kit Patton, shown in my drawing. Their key hands-on mission is to mentor rotating Gould Farm guests and volunteers, which at present include two visiting volunteers from Germany. The ambiance is congenial and decorative, with indoor greenery and lots more outdoors around the picnic tables in the summer.

Fiona herself has a green thumb, and she, Don, and family have renovated their charming farmhouse and barn just up the hill on the corner of Corashire and Main.

The most popular Roadside items for lunch are burgers, sandwiches, quiche, and salads, all available for takeout. Favorites are salmon lox and bagels, especially when the Board of Directors of the nearby Berkshire Fish Hatchery have their luncheon meetings there. And the menu includes Gould Farm produce and other delights such as Harvest Barn scones, breads, bagels, cheddar cheese, beef, bacon, yogurt, and granola. In season there are fresh fruits, lettuce, and vegetables. As a local convenience, milk, eggs, maple syrup, and cheese can be purchased from a refrigeration case at the front of the store.

Roadside is a pivotal work program for guests of Gould Farm who are challenged by mental illness and are working toward recovery. Guests receive expert clinical care and engage in meaningful work that supports the community until they are ready to move on and make their own way in life. Other Farm work teams include Forestry and Grounds, Farm and Animal Care, Garden Produce, Harvest Barn Culinary, Kitchen Operation, and Farm Maintenance. The Roadside program is also an opportunity for the public to be a part of the healing Gould Farm experience.

Gould Farm was founded in 1913 as the first healing community in the nation, based on 700 acres and structured as a little neighborhood within the larger Monterey community. Since then we have been blessed to travel down their scenic country waysides to destinations of farm houses, barns, sheds, and outbuildings of a still-functioning agricultural legacy. In another month they will be hanging maple-syrup buckets and lines to signal the renewal of another growing season. And once again the fields and folks of Gould farm will produce another "Harvest of Hope."

—George B. Emmons

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From the Meetinghouse . . .

Poets call April the cruelest month, but February can be the longest. Short on days, she's long on gray.

Even our attitude toward snow is different in February. By this time of winter, landscape's crisp black and white has lost its Ansel Adams cachet. Memories of the fluffy powder that fell in the middle of last month feel less contemporary than great-great grandma's sepia prints.

What to do? Move to Florida? (And leave Monterey?) Grin and bear it? (Tempting response, and useful at times.) Hibernate? (Not practical, and we New Englanders do tend toward practicality.) Ignore it? Not possible. But we always manage to manage, somehow.

One tool for managing February this year might be to turn navigating the month into a game. So, dare spring to show her face early, even before the snowdrops and crocuses make their gallant annual appearances. How? Invite this February to become Monterey Pre-Spring Scavenger Hunt Month.

Ready for the game rules? All participants in this game have to go to the indicated checkpoints, use the same clues, seek the same items and be vying for the same prize. Everyone involved has to keep his or her personal score, on the honor system.

The checkpoints and clues that count are outdoors. There are countless numbers of them, hidden all over our usual routes as we each go about our usual days. The clues are all hidden in plain sight.

What we're seeking are five colors and their family members: red, blue, yellow, green, white, and any mixture of any of those five. Sound boring? Only if you've never tried it.

Green's right here in these piney wood hills, but that's only a starting place. White will be easy, too, a good reason to welcome whatever amount of snowfall February brings. But where else do you find them? Vermont license plates.

Blue? Perhaps only easy if we have a few clear-sky days, imports from January or May. Red? Yellow? Let them, like the others, surprise you. Make friends with these colors and their family members. Let them lead you.

Let your eyes really explore Monterey outdoors, right while you're in it. It doesn't matter if you're on a walk, a passenger in a car, or sitting on a school bus near a window. Scavenge whatever colorful serendipity your journey through February brings. Just notice. Appreciate. Let yourself be startled. Do that, and you've won the game. Do that and you'll find yourself on the gold-medal tier inside the winner's circle.

Do you dare to play Monterey Pre-Spring Scavenger Hunt? Yeah, do that.

—Mary Kate Jordan

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Knox Gallery News

Pauline Nault: Mere Color Moves will open at the Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, on Friday, February 7, with a reception that evening from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

A Berkshire native, Pauline Faucher Nault was born in Williamstown, spent her middle years in Pittsfield, and continued her move south to Great Barrington in 1949. She began to develop an artistic eye even during her professional life in operating rooms as a Registered Nurse, observing that "the light was always artificial and the dominant color was drab green." She earned a BA in English with a strong emphasis in art history during a six-year stent in Brussels, Belgium, with her husband, Richard Nault, another Berkshire native. The Naults retired to Monterey in 1987.

As she entered retirement, yoga and art classes captivated Ms. Nault. She discovered "the excitement, difficulties and pleasures of art making," enjoying all its aspects, from "the thrill of handling tubes of paint, varied papers, brushes and spatulas" to "challenging the imagination and discovering the mystery behind the painting of a picture." Exploring different media and materials and both abstract and representational subject matter have lead her to find painting and its result to be "a companion and a pleasure throughout life and, with luck, through the generations."

Pauline Nault's paintings can be viewed at Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, during library hours through March 15.

Summer Community Exhibit

Call to friends and artists: Get out your cameras! For our community photography exhibit this summer we will ask for one framed, ready-to-hang photograph per artist that has been taken in Monterey during the preceding twelve months. Submissions will be due just after July 4, and the exhibit will run through July and most of August. We look forward to lots of interesting, creative, and varied pieces.

The Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, is located at 452 Main Road in Monterey, 413-528-3795. "Like" us: "Knox Gallery" on Facebook.

—MaryPaul Yates

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Help needed a few hours weekly: Shovel snow, carry firewood into house, odd jobs. Own transportation needed. Call Carol, 413-528-4135.

Available to do odd jobs, rates negotiable: Contact Nathan Purvis, 413-358-8577 or 365successalways@gmail.com.

The *Monterey News* will run this column, which we hope will help people make beneficial connections, when there is a need. Please send items to montereynews9@gmail.com.

Remembering Alan Silverstein

Alan Silverstein, 63, of Stockbridge, died Monday, January 20, at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, after a long illness. Alan was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. on May 21st, 1950, to Jack and Vivian Silverstein. He had one brother, Kenneth, who predeceased him. He moved to the Berkshires in 1973, after graduating from American University in Washington, D.C.

Alan Silverstein was a pioneer in the environmental movement in the Berkshires, joining the Center for Ecological Technology (CET) in 1978, where he met cofounder Laura Dubester. Laura and Alan married in 1992. For over 30 years Alan designed and managed many innovative energy efficiency, renewable energy and recycling programs. He played a key role in creating EcoBuilding Bargains. He produced workshops, trade shows, and regional forums and events and spearheaded community initiatives. As a member of the Massachusetts Recycling Task Force, he also helped to develop a statewide recycling strategy. He supervised CET's "Recycling to Build Community" in partnership with the Corporation for National Service a collaboration for which CET has served as host to more than sixteen AmeriCorps VISTA members.

Alan was a passionate woodsman, outdoorsman, and skilled athlete, bringing his unique presence to a wide range of activities: skiing, horseback riding, gardening, travel, golf, and softball. He was one of the founders of the weekly Sunday softball game at Greene Park in Monterey, where his left-handed power hitting broke open many a game. He was always a great sport, in sickness and in health. Everyone wanted to be on Alan's team.

Alan was a self-taught artist who exhibited his work in a variety of galleries, including Razor Gallery in Soho, Spazi Fine Art in Housatonic, Gallery Jurka in Amsterdam, and the Shade Gallery at The Bookstore in Lenox.

Not only did his close friends and family know and bask in the joy, gentleness, unfailing kindness of his manner in the world, but he had the unique ability to share these qualities with everyone whose path he crossed, finding the fun in everything he did, from work to play. His generosity ensured that that spirit was shared by all those around him. Alan was a veteran of the sixties and a lifelong advocate for peace and justice. There never was a sweeter man. Or more perfect gentleman.

He is survived by his wife, Laura; his mother, Vivian; his nephew, Larry Silverstein, and wife, Stefanie; his grandnieces, Sydney and Sloane; his goddaughters, Shawnee and Sophie Tannenbaum; and godson, Jake Weisman.

Alan Silverstein
1950–2014
"I Shall Be Released"
Not To Be Forgotten
From your fellow Monterey Sunday Softball Players

Remembering Arnold Pratt

Arnold L. Pratt, 74, died Thursday, January 2, at his home on Chestnut Hill Road in Monterey.

He was born on February 16, 1939, in Lee, MA, the son of Arnold and Mary Gaylord Pratt. He attended Lee High School. Mr. Pratt served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1959 until 1963, earning the rank of corporal. After the service he worked at Western Wire in Lee, then at Lee Marble and Palmer Paving before going to Lee Lime, where he retired.

Mr. Pratt is survived by his wife of forty-seven years, Kathleen Pratt (Heath). They were married on May 6, 1966. He is also survived by four sons: Arnold L. Pratt Jr. of North Carolina, James A. Pratt of North Carolina, Jonathan D. Pratt of Monterey, and Kenneth L. Pratt of Sandisfield; and one daughter, Mary Helen Modlin of North Carolina, as well as one sister, Lona Martin of Lenox Dale, MA, and five grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents and a son, Roland H. Pratt.

Friends wishing may make donations in his memory to Hospice Care in the Berkshires in c/o Kelly Funeral Home, 3 Main Street, Lee, MA 01238. If you would like to leave a message of condolence or share pictures or stories, please visit the website at www.kellyfuneralhome.net.

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Calendar

Every Monday except holidays: Select Board meeting, Town Hall, 9 a.m.

Through February 1: *In the Details*, an exhibition of small works by local artists in various materials, Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, during library hours.

Every Tuesday: Chair Yoga with Connie Wilson, 9–10 a.m., Monterey Town Hall. Free, sponsored by Monterey Park Commission.

Every Wednesday: Christian Meditation Group, Pittsfield. To learn more, call Val Latona, 413-528-3512. See p.13.

Tuesdays, February 4 and 18: Open Sewing Circle, 10–11:30 a.m., Monterey Library.

Saturday, February 8:

Monterey Democratic Caucus, 10 a.m., Monterey Church basement. All registered Monterey Democrats welcome. See p. 6.

Valentine's story and craft for preschool through elementary aged children, 10:30 a.m., Monterey Library.

Lenox Contradance. Live music by Aldo Lavaggi, Eric Buddington, and Karen Axelrod, with callers Jon Greene and Michael Kernan; dancing 8 to 11:30. All welcome; new dancers come at 8; all dances walked through. Lenox Community Center, 65 Walker St, www.lenoxcontradance.org, 413-528-4007.

Thursday, February 13: Free Blood Pressure Clinic with Visiting Nurses Assoc., 2–3 p.m., Town Hall Meeting Room.

Monday, February 17:

Presidents' Day, Town Hall, Library closed.

Annual Town Skating Party and Chili Cook-off, 1–3 p.m., Firehouse Pavilion. Everyone welcome; see p. 13.

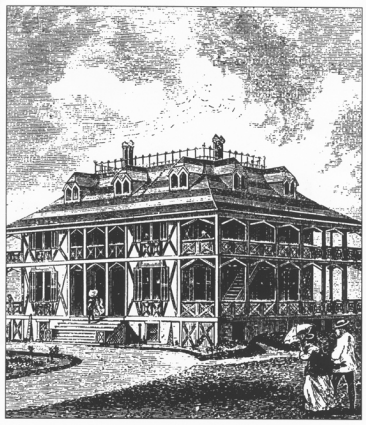
Wednesday, February 19: Community Potluck Dinner, 6 p.m., Monterey Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall. Dr. Lisa Nelson will speak on "The Myths of Aging." Everyone welcome; see p. 9.

Saturday, February 22: *The Power of Song*, a film about Pete Seeger, 7:30 p.m., Monterey Church basement. Free.

Monday, February 24: Adult book group will discuss *Yes, Chef* by Marcus Samuelsson, 7:30 p.m., Monterey Library. Newcomers welcome.

Tuesday, February 25: "Vision 2020," Community conversation with town officials to discuss pending major town projects and direction of town over next few years, 7 p.m., Town Hall. Everyone welcome. See pp. 5–6.

Saturday, March 1: Cabin Fever Reliever, 7:30 p.m. Monterey Meetinghouse: The Easy Ridin' Papas (Adam Brown of Monterey and William "Bing" Conklin of Sheffield) will be playing Depression-era blues, jazz, western swing, and gospel. Free. All are welcome!



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The Observer
December 26 – January 25

High temp. (1/11)	56º
Low temp. (1/4)	-11°
Avg. high temp.	29.0°
Avg. low temp.	9.9°
Avg. temp.	19.5°
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	4.82 in.
Snowfall	19.7 in.

Precipitation occurred on 19 days.

Contributors

Thanks to the following folks for their recent contributions.

Patricia Salomon & Julio Rodriguez
Kenneth and Laurel Kahn
Jane Allen
Laure Kaminsky
Michael Wilcox
Carol Edelman
Richard & Louise Skolnik
Jean Germain

Useful Town Phone Numbers

Assessor's Office: 528-1443 x115
(for questions about your assessment or abatements)
Tax Collector's Office: 528-1443 x117
(for questions about your tax bill)
Town Clerk: 528-1443 x113
(for marriage licenses, death & birth certificates, census, dog licenses)
Building Department: 528-1443 x118
Police Department (non-emergency): 528-1443 x116
Fire Department (non-emergency): 528-3136
Highway Department: 528-1734
Executive Secretary: 528-1443 x111
(for Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and other misc. questions)
Library: 528-3795
Post Office: 528-4670

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Reporter..... Susan Gallant
Mailing Labels ..... Joe Baker
Treasurer ..... Mari Enoch

Contributions from local artists this month: Maureen Banner, 21; George Emmons, 20; Glynis Marsh 11; Bonner McAllester, 18.

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